

on Education and the Workforce and ordered to be printed:

*To the Congress of the United States:*

I am pleased to transmit today for your immediate consideration and enactment the "Class-Size Reduction and Teacher Quality Act of 1998." This legislative proposal would help States and local school districts recruit, train, and hire 100,000 additional well-prepared teachers in order to reduce the average class size to 18 in grades 1 through 3 in our Nation's public schools. It is an essential part of our overall effort to strengthen public schools throughout the Nation.

As schools across the Nation struggle to accommodate a surge in enrollments, educators and parents have become increasingly concerned about the impact of class size on teaching and learning, particularly in the critically important early grades, where students learn reading and other basic skills. This concern is justified: rigorous research confirms what parents and teachers have long believed—that students in smaller classes, especially in the early grades, make greater educational gains and maintain those gains over time. These gains occur because teachers in small classes can provide students with more individualized attention, spend more time on instruction and less time on discipline, and cover more material effectively. Moreover, the benefits of smaller classes are greatest for poor, minority, and inner-city children, the children who often face the greatest challenges in meeting high educational standards.

Smaller classes will have the greatest impact on student learning if the new teachers brought into the classroom are well qualified to teach reading and to take advantage of smaller learning environments. For this reason, my proposal emphasizes not just class-size reduction but also professional development for educators, and it will give school districts adequate time to recruit and train staff while phasing in smaller classes. Furthermore, all new teachers hired under the program would be required to pass a State teacher competency test and would also have to be certified to teach or be making satisfactory progress toward full certification.

We can help all of our students learn to read independently and well by the third grade, get a solid foundation in basic skills, and reach high educational standards if we start them off with small classes and well-prepared teachers in the early grades.

Under my proposal, the Department of Education would provide \$20.8 billion in mandatory appropriations over a 10-year period (beginning with \$1.1 billion in fiscal year 1999) to States. The States would then distribute the funds to local school districts based on their relative class sizes in grades 1 through 3, as well as on their ability and effort to finance class-size reductions with their own resources. The bill would provide States with considerable flexi-

bility in distributing these funds, while ensuring that the most needy school districts receive a fair share.

Moreover, because my proposal would actually appropriate the funds needed to carry out the program, States and local communities could count on these funds without the need for separate congressional appropriations each year. This proposal is fully paid for within my Fiscal Year 1999 Budget, and therefore would not reduce the budget surplus.

School districts would use these funds to reduce class sizes in grades 1 through 3. Just as importantly, these funds would also be available for a variety of activities to ensure that students in the early grades receive sound and effective instruction, such as making sure that teachers know how to teach reading and other subjects effectively in small classes.

This proposal includes strong accountability for results. Participating school districts would produce "report cards" documenting reductions in class sizes and the achievement of their students in reading, based on rigorous assessments. Schools whose students fail to make gains in reading would be required to undertake corrective actions. In addition, the Department of Education would undertake a comprehensive national evaluation of this program and its impact on reading achievement and teaching.

I urge the Congress to take prompt and favorable action on this proposal. Its enactment would help school districts reduce class sizes in the early grades and improve instruction and achievement in reading, issues that are of major importance to parents and to the Nation.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON.

THE WHITE HOUSE, May 8, 1998.

#### SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 1997, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

#### IN RECOGNITION OF CLYDE DREXLER ON HIS RETIREMENT FROM THE HOUSTON ROCKETS AND THE NBA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. BENTSEN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BENTSEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise in proud recognition of a great athlete and legend in the City of Houston, Clyde Drexler, on the occasion of his retirement from the Houston Rockets and the National Basketball Association.

Clyde "the Glide" Drexler had an impressive 15-year career in the NBA, but many people in Houston remember him first from his days with the University of Houston Cougars in the early 1980s. Under the leadership of head coach Guy

V. Lewis, Drexler and his future NBA teammate, Hakeem Olajuwon, took the Cougars to the NCAA's Final Four in 1982, with Clyde averaging 15.2 points and 10.5 rebounds per game.

In 1983, Drexler earned first-team All-America honors after leading the Cougars to their second straight NCAA Final Four in the first national championship game. The Cougars, known as Phi Slamma Jamma, ended the year 31-3 and won their first Southwest Conference regular season championship with a perfect 16-0 record, and were ranked atop the national polls. Drexler is the only Cougar to amass more than 1,000 points, 900 rebounds, 300 assists, and 250 steals in a career. His 268 career steals remain as a UH record.

A first round selection of the Portland Trail Blazers in 1983, Drexler led the team to two NBA finals and made the playoffs in each of his 15 seasons. A member of the original Olympic Dream Team, Drexler won a gold medal in Barcelona in 1992.

Clyde was reunited with Olajuwon when he was traded to the Rockets on February 14, 1995, and helped lead the Rockets to their second straight NBA championship. Drexler was named one of the NBA's 50 all-time greatest players in 1997 and made five all-NBA teams.

Drexler, Oscar Robertson, and John Havlicek are the only players in league history to post more than 20,100 points, 6,000 rebounds, and 6,000 assists. His 2,963 clear playoff points put him at number 15 on the all-time playoff scoring list. He also grabbed the 1,000th playoff rebound of his career on this past Sunday, when he finished his career in the NBA.

On May 18, 1998, Drexler announced his retirement plans as he accepted the job as the head coach for the men's basketball program at the University of Houston. While the Rockets' season ended on a disappointing note, I'm sure the City of Houston is extraordinarily proud of the career of one of their own, Clyde Drexler. As the next chapter of his career begins, what better place to share his talent, heart, and determination than with the Cougars and the City of Houston.

I know that I join with all sports fans in the City of Houston in looking forward to many more years of basketball excitement from Clyde Drexler, and wish him all the best in his new endeavor.

#### THE FREEDOM FROM RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. WOLF) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. WOLF. Mr. Speaker, I want to spend a moment talking about the Freedom from Religious Persecution Act, H.R. 2431, which will be on the floor for debate at the end of this week. The bill is bipartisan, it has over 131 cosponsors, and it was reported out of